

RCW 28A.300.444 Integration of environmental and sustainability content. (1) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall provide state leadership for the integration of environmental and sustainability content with curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

(2) (a) Subject to funds appropriated for this specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall contract on a competitive basis with a Washington state-based qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit community-based organization to integrate the state learning standards in English language arts, mathematics, and science with outdoor field studies and project-based and work-based learning opportunities aligned with the environmental, natural resources, and agricultural sectors.

(b) The selected Washington state nonprofit organization must work collaboratively with the office of the superintendent of public instruction and educational service districts to:

(i) Build systemic programming that connects administrators, school boards, and communities to support teacher practice and student opportunities for the strengthened delivery of environmental and sustainability education;

(ii) Support K-12 educators to teach students integrated, equitable, locally relevant, real-world environmental science and engineering outdoors, aligned to Washington science and environmental and sustainability education standards, and provide opportunities to engage students in renewable natural resource career awareness; and

(iii) Deliver learning materials, opportunities, and resources including, but not limited to:

(A) Providing opportunities outside the classroom to connect transdisciplinary content, concepts, and skills in the context of the local community;

(B) Encouraging application of critical and creative thinking skills to identify and analyze issues, seek answers, and engineer solutions;

(C) Creating community-connected, local opportunities to engage students in stewardship projects that enhance their interest in sustaining the ecosystem and respecting natural resources;

(D) Providing work-based learning opportunities for careers in the environmental science and engineering, natural resources, sustainability, renewable energy, agriculture, and outdoor recreation sectors and build skills for completion of industry recognized certifications; and

(E) Providing models for integrating since time immemorial in teaching materials so that students learn the unique heritage, history, culture, and government of the nearest federally recognized Indian tribe or tribes.

(c) Priority focus must be given to schools that have been identified for improvement through the Washington school improvement framework and communities historically underserved by science education. These communities can include, but are not limited to, tribal nations including tribal compact schools, migrant students, schools with high free and reduced-price lunch populations, rural and remote schools, students in alternative learning environments, students of color, English language learner students, and students receiving special education services.

(3) For the purposes of this section, a "qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit community-based organization" means a nonprofit organization physically located in Washington state that:

(a) Has multiple years of experience collaborating with school districts across the state to provide high quality professional development to kindergarten through twelfth grade educators to teach students real-world environmental science and engineering outside the classroom;

(b) Whose materials and instructional practices align with Washington's environmental and sustainability learning standards and the Washington state learning standards, including the common core standards for mathematics and English language arts;

(c) Whose materials and instructional practices emphasize the next generation science standards to support local, relevant, and field-based learning experiences; and

(d) Delivers project-based learning materials and resources that incorporate career connections to local businesses and community-based organizations, contain professional development support for classroom teachers, have measurable assessment objectives, and have demonstrated community support. [2020 c 292 § 2.]

Findings—2020 c 292: "The legislature finds that environmental and sustainability education offers a rich and meaningful context for integrated learning and teaching. The legislature also finds that nonprofit community-based organizations are uniquely positioned to strengthen classroom learning by partnering and collaborating with schools and local employers to offer K-12 educators work-integrated learning experiences that address the Washington state science learning standards including next generation science standards. Close collaboration with educational service district's regional science coordinators can optimize learning by helping align next generation science standards implementation with community-based organization initiatives to ensure all students have access to engaging field experiences allowing them to understand the scientific, social, and economic impacts of healthy community resources such as gardens, watersheds and water systems, energy systems, or forests so they can participate in solutions to problems such as ocean acidification, rural economic development, or ecosystems impacted by megafires." [2020 c 292 § 1.]